



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

March 4, 2015

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Morna A. Murray, J.D., Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of our agency bill **H.B. No. 6815** **AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION AND USE OF THE TERM "INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY"**.

H.B. No. 6815 is the culmination of a long transition away from the use of the term "mental retardation" in Connecticut state statutes. From almost a decade ago, when advocates worked to change the name of our department to the Department of Developmental Services up until 2015 when our state will finally be defining "intellectual disability" without reference to "mental retardation", it has been an incremental process. With the passage of **H.B. No. 6815**, DDS and its advocates will have achieved the goal of eliminating one of the most hurtful and stigmatizing labels from Connecticut statutes. Although the completion of this change in terminology has been a long term endeavor, it has actually provided the public with an opportunity to become comfortable with the new terms of "intellectual disability" and "developmental disabilities" while coming to realize just how stigmatizing and inappropriate the "R" word truly is.

I would like to express my thanks to the members of the Public Health Committee who, over the years, have supported our department's efforts to change the way persons with intellectual disability are referred to both in statute and in everyday life. Although the transition seems to have been done in a piecemeal fashion over several sessions, oftentimes Connecticut had to wait for the federal government and the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders to catch up to where our advocates were asking DDS to go. Throughout the process, your committee's membership have met with and encouraged our advocates to complete this transition to the use of respectful and appropriate terms throughout Connecticut statutes.

The department is also requesting that the Public Health Committee allow a change of language in section 1-1g of the Connecticut General Statutes. Specifically, DDS asks that in line 5 the "and" be deleted and "concurrently with" be substituted. This change would clear up an unintended consequence of a prior revision of the statute made in **Public Act 12-136**. In 2012, when section 1-1g was being revised to reflect the new criteria being used in the DSM-5's definition of "intellectual disability", the "and" did not appear to be problematic because the

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professional standard for determining eligibility had always been that the intelligence quotient (IQ) and the adaptive behavior determination would take place at approximately the same time. Subsequently, the need to return to the statute's previous language of "concurrently with" was understood when it was realized that the "and" in the definition was not specific enough and could have allowed persons to pick and choose adaptive scores and IQ scores from throughout a person's developmental period. I hope you will consider making this change which will bring necessary clarity to the DDS eligibility determination process.

Thank you again for your continued support of DDS, persons with intellectual disability and individuals with autism spectrum disorder in Connecticut. My staff and I would be happy to answer any questions that you have on H.B. No. 6815. Please contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs, at (860) 418-6066 if you would like additional information from DDS.